15: Nakane K-9 (1955-1956) 1967 AR? Khasi AR?

I. Setting and Economic Background of Sohkynduh and Kongtop

Sohkynduh and Kongtop are villages of the Kuloshimong,[1] one of the areas under the Cherra Chief. The Kuloshimong is situated on the southern slope of the Khasi Hills, in what is called War country. These two villages are situated at the furthest point from both Shella, the centre bordered by the plain, and Cherrapunjee, the seat of the Cherra Chief, one of the centres of the upland Khasi Hills. The people at Cherrapunjee say that these villages are one of the most backward parts of the Khasi Hills. They correspond to Rombagiri in the Garo Hills, as they lie in the innermost parts and more traditional economic and social settings have been preserved there than in other villages. These are also the reasons why I selected these villages as my field.

It is nine miles to Sohkynduh from Cherrapunjee, crossing two deep valleys towards the east. Kongtop is located at the heart of the mountain ranges, ten miles from Cherrapunjee, towards the north-east. It is about twelve miles from Sohkynduh to Kongtop, and the way leads through one of the most difficult passes, where even villagers seldom travel. In December, 1955, Sohkynduh was a community of 48 households (List 6), and Kongtop of 62 households (List 9). The settlements of both villages are clustered in the southern depression of a mountain, not far from the summit, a typical location of Khasi villages. Sohkynduh has poor soil, covered with plenty of pieces of stones. The yield therefore is very poor. On the other hand, Kongtop, a much older village, enjoys fertile soil, and is one of the most prosperous communities in the Kuloshimong.

The major economy of both villages is shifting cultivation. We have already seen, in the chapters on the Garo, the fundamental technique of "jhuming cultivation." The differences between the Garo and the Khasi shifting cultivation are to be found in two aspects: one is the nature of the crops and the other is the type of landownership. In this area, the main crop is millet, while that of the Garo is rice. Besides the shifting cultivation, the Khasi have *pan-leaf* gardens and sometimes pineapple gardens, though on a small scale and not in every household. The most important feature of Khasi shifting cultivation is the development of private ownership. In the tribal areas in Assam, such private ownership of the jhum field is quite an

1. Kuloshimong is the name of a group of villages. Its literal meaning is "twelve villages," and it comprises the following villages: Sohkynduh, Kyrmen, Khatkasem, Mawshun, Mawmang, Kongtop, Mawlong, Kyrdemlieh, Pilu, Tmalum, Mawprang, and Mongpoh. [Khasi spelling follows the customary usage in Cherra State.]

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1957 AR? Khasi AR?

APPENDIX

SOME ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM SHELLA AND JAITINGA

Shella

Shella is situated on the crest of the southern slopes of the Khasi Hills, bordering on the Sylhet plain of East Pakistan. For centuries the people of Shella maintained close trading connections with the people of the plain, so that they have been much influenced by the Hindu. They have been to some extent divorced economically and culturally from their own people who live in the uplands and on higher part of the slopes. Actually, this is a natural result of their geographical location. From Cherrapunjee, the southern edge of the upland Khasi Hills, only a narrow footpath goes down to Shella. The altitude of Cherrapunjee is about 3,000 feet and of Shella from 300 to 1,000 feet, and the distance between them is 8 miles. The path descends very steeply and is full of hard stones. This difficulty of communication is also why the Hindu influence did not penetrate the upland Khasi, as in the case of the Jaintia Hills.[1]

This area has a unique political organization which differs from the majority of Khasi states who are traditionally ruled by the members of the Siem clan. Shella is organized as a confederation, called 'Shella Confederacy,' and consists of four local villages. The head of the village is called *sadadhar*, and is elected by the villagers every three years. The number of households of the Shella Confederacy was about 300 in January 1958. The names of the four villages and their *sadadhar* in 1958 were:

Name of village	*Name of sadadhar*
1. Shella	Dewish Mohan Roy
2. Khadarah	Dhanjoy Roy
3. Nongkrem	Ojoy Roy
4. Tyngngor	Jubeen Roy

Each village is divided into sections. For instance, Shella village has nine sections: (1) Jaiew, (2) Dieng, (3) Diella, (4) Jaimon, (5) Nongkrem, (6) Nongsong,

1. However, Shella was the only way out and the main gateway from the Khasi Hills to the plain; it was here that the British first entered the Khasi Hills. They proceeded from Shella to Cherrapunjee and made the latter headquarters of the Khasi Hills in 1833.

In McCormack R-4.5 [1956-1958] 1966

[P. 104 B]

AB? Khasi AB?

(1903-25; J. Barth 1982) Demography. According to the 1881 census of India, the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District contained 221,902 Khasis and 97,932 Syntengs, Pnars and Jaintias (India [Republic] 1953: 57). These figures, together with those for Khasis enumerated in Cachar (4,000), Mikir and North Cachar Hills (407), Lakhimpur (29), Sibsagar (270), and Darrang (211) districts, and those for Syntengs enumerated in Mikir and North Cachar District (406), yield a total of 298,224 Khasis. History and cultural relations. Khasis believe that they had supernatural origin in Khasi Hills (see Gait 1905: 88) for however evidence; and Rafy 1920: 9-1 for myth), but see also Corry 1886; 1900; Gordon 1897: 10-11, and Chatterji 1951: 12). Khasi tradition also states that in early times they moved gradually from east to west, from Jaintia toward Khasi Hills, in the practice of swidden agriculture (Gurdon 1947: 97-98). The salient fact of known Khasi history, which began generally in the mid-sixteenth century A.D. when Khasis already occupied the present-day 25 native Khasi chiefdoms, is the distinctive line of development followed by the separate kingdom of Jaintia. To the north, Jaintia was commercially subsidiary in part or in whole, to the Kachari kingdom (ca. 1520 A.D.), the Koch kingdom (emergent ca. 1500 A.D.), and the Ahom kingdom (emergent ca. 1720 A.D.) (Shakespear 1914: Map 1). To the south, about 1500 A.D., Jaintia extended its rule over a tract of Sylhet, which was populated by Hindus and Muslims, and saw its kings fall themselves under Brahman influence. In the early 1800s, Jaintia became involved in the fratricidal strife then prevalent in the ruling family of Manipur. In 1835, after the Jaintia king ignored British warnings not to seize British subjects for human sacrifice, Jaintia was punished by the British annexation of the Jaintia parganas in Sylhet. The Jaintia king then voluntarily turned over to the British the hills-area of his domain, so that the whole of Jaintia became part of British India and, in 1880, came to be taxed as such, although the Jaintias were otherwise allowed to maintain their traditional system of village government. • By contrast, the remaining Khasi states had few formal external relations until British times. Khasis raided and traded in both the Brahmaputra and Sylhet valleys, but were hostilely turned upward on their own hills, where warfare between villages and between the states was apparently common. Khasis came into indirect relation with the British in 1765, when Sylhet and its markets became part of British India. In the 1770s, engaging Khasi raids into Sylhet caused the British to throw up a defensive line of forts along the foothills. Later, it became necessary to place an embargo on Khasi goods sent to the Sylhet markets. In 1827, the British pressured into western Khasi Hills by negotiating with the Khasi chief of Nongkhlaw [illegible] to build a road through his territory, linking the temperate Brahmaputra valley with Calcutta. For three decades

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR? Khasi AR?

homicide), to which their own subjects are concerned. All cases of homicide, or matters involving disputes between people belonging to different States, are adjudicated upon by the British officers of the District. 696 692

In the British possessions, the principal sources of revenue are rents and royalties derived from mineral workings, such as lime and coal; rents of fisheries; and a house tax, which varies, according to situation and productiveness of the soil, from Rs. 1 to Rs. 5 on from 10 to 50 per house. A land tax is only levied in tracts where the Government possesses the actual proprietary right to the soil. Again, in the Khasi States, the British Government, which undertakes the management of the natural products of the country, such as waste lands, coal, lime, etc., receives a half-share of the rents realized from these sources, the other half belonging to the native Chiefs. The other sources of revenue of the Chiefs are market dues, cesses levied occasionally for State purposes, and fines realized in the administration of justice. 693 691 (115)

Revenue.—Our first knowledge of the Khasi Hills dates from the time when the East India Company acquired the *diwani* of Bengal in 1765. The adjoining District of Sylhet was included in that grant; but as the hillmen had never acknowledged any subjection to the Mahomedans, so they still remained absolutely independent of the British power. However, the necessities of commerce, arising from their monopoly of the lime quarries, from which Bengal has always to supply lime (now commercial, even ornamental European enterprise to the country. As stated in the Appendix to the Statistical Account of Sylhet, the control of the profits of the lime trade formed in early times one of the most valuable advantages attaching to the position of the official in charge of that District. It does not appear that any Europeans had been interested to settle in the Hills before 1840. In that year the Rāja of Nongkhlaw entered into an agreement with certain European British subjects to allow a road to be made across the Hills, to connect the Sylhet valley with Assam Proper. These Europeans took up their residence at Nongkhlaw. Misunderstandings unfortunately arose, and, partly by the connivance of some of their Bengāli followers, the growing discontent and opprobrium were turned into a flame. On 4th April 1829 the Khāsiās rose in arms and massacred Lieutenants Bedingfield and Burlton, together with some sepoys. This led to military operations on the part of the British Government, which 175 698 (115) (117)